

Protect Your Home From the Silent Killer: Heat Safely to Avoid Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Dover – With temperatures starting to drop, especially at night, many Delawareans are beginning to pull out their home heating devices. Now is the time to educate yourself about carbon monoxide, the colorless, odorless gas that is produced by fuel-burning heating sources, appliances, and engines. Furnaces, vehicles, snow blowers, portable generators, stoves, lanterns, gas ranges, and charcoal or wood grills are all potential sources of this dangerous gas. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseous.

“Each year, more than 400 Americans die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning, more than 20,000 visit the emergency room and over 4,000 are hospitalized,” said Ming Lau, DPM, environmental health toxicologist at the Division of Public Health. “Pregnant women, infants, elderly people and those who suffer from anemia, respiratory or heart disease are most susceptible.”

When power outages occur during emergencies such as hurricanes or winter storms, the use of alternative sources of power for heating, cooling, or cooking can cause carbon monoxide to build up in a home, garage, or camper.

PREVENTION

The best way to protect yourself and be aware of potential carbon monoxide in your home or garage is to purchase and install a reliable battery-operated carbon monoxide detector. These devices are similar to a smoke alarm, and are available

at stores that sell home hardware. Follow these additional steps to prevent poisonings:

- Don't heat your house with a gas oven.
- Have your heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- Test your battery-operated carbon monoxide detector monthly and replace the battery at the same time each year.
- Don't use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement, or garage or outdoors less than 20 feet from a window, door, or vent.
- Don't run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- Don't light a stove or fireplace that isn't vented.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is entirely preventable. For more information, go to <http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dph/hsp/hhinsideco.html>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.